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SUBJECT: CZECH EU PRESIDENCY: COMMENTS ON UPCOMING JANUARY
GAERC

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: On January 21 emboff spoke with Magdalena Janesova of the Czech MFA Department of Common Foreign and Security Policy in advance of the January 26-27 EU General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC). Of note were her comments on: Gaza, the Balkans, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Belarus, Ukraine and Guantanamo. End Summary.

EU Engagement on Gaza

[1](#)2. (SBU) Janesova noted with some surprise that we had points on so many topics, but yet none related to the current situation in Gaza. She noted that the EU FMs are focusing intensely on this subject and referenced the January 21 dinner the Czechs hosted for the EU 27 with Israeli FM Livni in Brussels. While the EU reiterated the importance of opening border crossings to allow for humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, Livni apparently made no promises. She has also apparently made no move to accept the EU offer to augment the EU Rafah border monitoring mission, which the EU believes would help to address the issue of smuggling. Both Janesova and Deputy Director Katerina Sequensova, who joined for this portion of the discussion, spoke with extreme skepticism about the EU offer of a border mission, given the lack of enthusiasm from Israel and Egypt. They also cited comments by Robert Cooper of the European Council Secretariat who has apparently noted that such a monitoring missions faces serious handicaps; communication with all of the relevant parties is problematic, especially as the EU does not directly communicate with Hamas. The EU, and the Czechs in particular, are also looking to what more can be done to address the humanitarian crisis and they are working in cooperation with the Egyptians on a conference, likely to be held in Cairo around February 15. Janesova also highlighted the EU FMs are meeting with their Egyptian, Jordanian, Palestinian Authority and Norwegian counterparts on the evening of January 26 in Brussels (Note: Earlier in the week Turkey was announced as one of the invited participants at this dinner although Janesova did not mention Turkey as one of the scheduled participants during her discussion with Emboff on January 21. EndNote).

The Western Balkans - Kosovo, Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia,
Macedonia and Montenegro

13. (SBU) According to Janesova, the Western Balkans will be dropped from next week's GAERC agenda and instead the Czechs will "work the corridors" before putting this back on the agenda. (Note: It appears that part of this decision stems from Dutch intransigence on EU enlargement while things remain unresolved on the Lisbon Treaty, Slovene concerns about Croatia, and Greek issues with Macedonia. End Note.) Nonetheless, Janesova offered several insights related to the region.

14. (SBU) Kosovo: In response to our query about the EULEX operational capability, she noted that things have been moving a bit slower than they would like. Her sense was that EULEX was likely to reach full operational capability only around the end of March. The Czechs agree that customs, courts and police remain key issues. Janesova indicated that they are paying particular attention to recognition (or lack thereof) of Kosovo customs stamps by Serbia. She acknowledged A/S Fried's emphasis on the need for institutionalized coordination between the key organizations in Pristina made during the Political Director's meeting as well as the fact that Robert Cooper of the European Council Secretariat planned to look into improving this, particularly as it relates to ICR Feith and EULEX HOM de Kermabon. She mused aloud that perhaps the EU member states should request joint reports of conditions on the ground from the Secretariat as both Feith and de Kermabon report up the same chain of command there.

15. (SBU) Serbia: Janesova commented that the EU PSC

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Ambassadors agreed to establish a two person office in Belgrade. While the mandate is apparently still being fleshed out, the Czechs apparently would like to see this office staffed by people with technical expertise. On the issue of the Serbian Stabilization and Association Agreement, the Czechs note the Dutch remain steadfast on the need for Serbian compliance with the ICTY before they will support any further movement on the SAA.

16. (SBU) Bosnia: Janesova noted that with the upcoming PIC scheduled for early March, the EU believes that it is important to move toward closing the Office of the High Representative and that the Council Secretariat continues to work on the mandate for the EU Special Representative. The Czechs believe that continuing the OHR will not help the current situation. Signaling that the EU may view things slightly differently than the U.S. in this sphere, Janesova commented that many of the "five plus two" objectives and conditions are very much open to interpretation, questioning what exactly constitutes "internal stability," or "resolving the status of Brcko district."

17. (SBU) Croatia: Janesova noted that there are three Slovene issues on the table hampering progress on Croatian accession. She noted that there remains an unresolved border concern related to a Slovene seaside port which falls within the territorial waters of Croatia. There are also issues related to Ljubljana Bank. Apparently after this bank was nationalized, problems remained regarding the accounts of Croatian nationals. Janesova noted that the Slovenes thus have blocked discussion of the Croatian accession chapter related to the free flow of capital. Third, there is a concern related to the nuclear power plant in Slovenia. Apparently there are disagreements between the Croatians and Slovenes regarding how nuclear waste disposal will be paid for and handled.

18. (U) Montenegro and Macedonia: With respect to Macedonia, Janesova noted that the EU is in an awkward position with the

lack of flexibility from either Macedonia or Greece on the name issue as well as upcoming March elections in Macedonia. With respect to Montenegro, Janesova noted that once again it has been the Dutch that have been especially difficult holding up movement on all enlargement issues.

Africa - Sudan and Zimbabwe

¶9. (SBU) On our points related to Sudan and Darfur, the Czechs expressed concern about the work remaining on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The Czechs also believe that much of this will require pragmatism on behalf of the international community as President Bashir's involvement will very likely be required if any progress is to be made. The Czechs also thanked us for referencing the U.S.-EU mission to eastern Chad from January 25-31. As they were unaware of the details of this mission, they asked us to please pass along additional details, especially related to who was representing the EU on this mission. Janesova noted that the EU would be renewing its restrictive measures on Zimbabwe and adding additional measures. In the upcoming GAERC statement they are also planning to call for a fact finding mission related to trade in illicit diamonds. The Czechs also flagged their interest in our point related to a possible future UNSC resolution on Zimbabwe. They would welcome additional information of what we would press for in terms of the substance of such a resolution.

Ukraine and Belarus

¶10. (SBU) The EU has its troika with Belarus at the Foreign Ministerial level on January 27. At this time they plan to discuss EU-Belarus relations (to include human rights and democracy concerns), regional issues related to Moldova, Russia and Ukraine, and economic/energy topics. With respect to the EU-Eastern Partnership Summit in May, Janesova stated that the EU reviews the restrictions in place against Belarus in April, and that any potential invitation to Lukashenka to the summit would likely not be issued until after the restrictions are reviewed and there is an indication that the Belarus government has made progress on key reforms. On the

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Ukraine, Janesova noted that they will have a troika discussion on February 5 and they will also discuss three key topics: gas (lessons learned and the way forward), the concept of the Eastern Partnership and the EU-Ukraine relationship, which very much flows from the second topic.

Guantanamo

¶11. (SBU) The Czechs expressed pleasure with the first comments of the Obama administration as well as the executive orders related to Guantanamo. They commented that the Foreign Minister's discussions would be done during the informal luncheon and that the EU was not planning to issue any statements on this, other than the January 22 statement welcoming the signing of the executive orders. With respect to possible visits to the U.S. by Commissioner Barrot or Czech Minister of Interior Langer to discuss Guantanamo (reftels B and C), the Czech MFA officials checked with the Czech MOI security policy department on January 20, which was unaware of such a trip. (Note: Emboffs also checked with MOI contacts who indicated that as of now a visit by Czech Minister Langer was "more of an intention than a coherent plan." End Note.)
Thompson-Jones